Is body really Oswald?

Exhumation sought by Dallas officials

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Bulletin Wire Services

Dallas — Dallas County authorities confirmed yesterday they are seeking permission to exhume the body of the man who assassinated President John F. Kennedy because they are no longer certain it is that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Dallas County Medical Examiner Charles Petty said he has asked neighboring Tarrant County that the coffin buried in Ft. Worth's Rose Hill Cemetery be dug up and reopened for a new autopsy.

Assistant medical examiner Dr. Linda Norton said the request was made after British author Michael Eddowes presented evidence supporting his contention Kennedy was killed by a trained Soviet KGB agent masquerading as Oswald.

"The data was presented to us in August, and it took some time to evaluate and decide if we felt that professionally and scientifically there was a legitimate question," Dr. Norton said. "We had to decide if it was in the public interest and if it was worth spending taxpayer money. We decided it was."

Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963, as his motorcade moved past the Texas School Book Depository building in Dallas. A man whom officials identified as Oswald was arrested within hours afterward and accused in the killing.

Two days after Kennedy was slain, Oswald was gunned down in the basement of the Dallas County courthouse by nightclub owner Jack Ruby.

The assassination has spawned numerous conspiracy theories, one of which contends Russian agents were responsible for Kennedy's death.

Earlier this year, Eddowes presented evidence to a district court in Tarrant County asking for the exhumation. That court dismissed the suit, however, saying it could act only at the request of Dallas County officials. Eddowes then took his case to that county's medical examiner.

Eddowes book, "The Oswald File" suggests a Soviet agent took Oswald's place while Oswald was in Russia, came to the United States, killed Kennedy and is buried in

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Oswald's grave.

Eddowes says he has evidence indicating that Lee Harvey Oswald, who defected to the Soviet Union in 1959, was not the man who returned to the United States in 1962 with a Soviet wife and represented himself as Oswald.

Oswald's wife, Marina, who has since remarried, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Eddowes said the 1963 autopsy records fail to record a scar behind the body's left ear from a mastoidectomy Oswald underwent. Records also indicate Oswald's dental X-rays were not compared with the corpse's teeth, he adds.

Dr. Norton said data presented to her office "involves height, eye color" and other discrepancies between autopsy records taken after the assassin was killed and Oswald's Marine records.

"The differences show up between his (military) entrance records in 1956 and the autopsy. In one his height, for instance, is 5-foot-11. In the other it is 5-foot-9," she said.

She said her office made an inquiry to Marine Corps officials and had obtained dental records from Oswald's military file. She said that if the exhumation request is approved, the records would be used to confirm or contradict the identification of the body as that of Oswald.

Tarrant County authorities have not responded to the request to bring the coffin up for new tests. Dr. Norton said some officials were reluctant to go ahead with what normally would be a routine exhumation order.

"We feel (the original) autopsy was incomplete in terms of making positive identication of the victim," Dr. Norton said. "Under normal circumstances it (the exhumation) probably would be done easily, but because it's Oswald . . ."

"I feel it would be in the best public interest to conduct the exhumation," she added. "However, there are apparent legal disagreements . . . and political forces who do not want this body dug up."

Acting Tarrant County Medical Examiner Nizan Peerwani said, "This is a very delicate situation, and we have to tread very carefully."